UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI

Outline of the Research Proposal Submitted for the dissertation in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Arts) in the subject of English Language and Literature.

1. Title of the proposal : Immigrant Experiences and Identity Issues: A diasporic study of the select works of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai

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Introduction:

The word 'Diaspora' comes from the Greek word which means "to disperse." Diaspora is simply the displacement of a community or culture into another geographical and cultural region. Bhikhu Parekh, an Indian political theorist, describes the Indian Diasporas as: "like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world." [10]

The Indian diaspora is the second-largest diaspora in the world. For the past ten to twelve years the Indian diasporic writers have became the focus of their outstanding works. The list of Diasporic writer is very long and the root of Diaspora is so deep. This research proposal tends to focus mainly on the diasporic study of the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Bharati Mukherjee.These writers mainly used and examined the themes of displacement, alienation, assimilation, identity crisis, nostalgia and cultural adaptation in their works. Selected authors are the prominent diasporic writers and they have excelled in their works. The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri written in the year 2003. It is the debut novel by the most celebrated writer of Indian diaspora.. Jhumpa Lahiri's life is similar to the Gogol and Sonia in The Namesake. She is an innovative writer of the diasporic dilemma and dreams and her novel The Namesake is a novel about the identities and cultural clash. It sheds light upon the plight of immigrants who struggle with their identities and attempt to fit into an unfamiliar socio-cultural environment. They invent imaginary homeland through memory. The feelings of alienation, identity confusion, nostalgia and cultural assimilation are easily traceable in the novel. The Lowland reveals the result of choices made by two major characters Subhash and Gauri and the their struggle to cope up with the guilt and past memories which not only affect them but also affected the next generations. The Lowland addresses complicated identities of the characters who possess split personalities and have become members of diaspora by their destiny. On the other hand Kiran Desai's second novel The Inheritance of Loss mainly revolves around living between two worlds . The story centres around the lives of Biju and Sai. The sense of displacement is caused by loss of cultural connections with the place which further causes the loss of one's identity. This novel demonstrates this problem in

the character of judge who does experience of dislocation twice. Lahiri in the Namesake is different agreeing with the facts and reality. She shows the real life narratives of such everyday negotiations and reminds the reader of the power that language and in particular a name can have over a person. While Bharati Mukherjee tries to explore the themes of immigration as well as transformation. she tries to represent the changing nature of immigrants due to continuous dislocations, which facilitate the characters to transform and assimilate into a new environment. The problems of identity found more prominently in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee and she brings out the segregation experienced by the immigrants of South Asian Countries. The selected novels Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the multicultural identity and struggle as an immigrant. In these novels she has depicted the movement of Indian women from India to the United States and what strategies of survival they adopt as they relocate themselves in a new and alien world. Select authors and works document the pain and hardships of the people who migrate to foreign land. This proposal is an effort to portray the bitter experiences of homelessness, displacement, oppression and exploitation of the main characters in the selected works of the selected writers.

Rationale and Significance of the Study:

The significance of the study is to identify the effects of identity crisis and cultural collision. This research attempts to approach the immigrant characters constantly undergo the process of the transformation, adaptation and imitation. There is a need to understand the plight and the sufferings of the diaspora communities, and their struggle to maintain a balance between the Indian tradition and new ways of life in the foreign land. The diasporic writers have explored their sense of mixed identity which is the most important theme in all the diasporic works. Selected writers has given more poignancy to the exploration by dealing not only with a geographical dislocation but also a socio cultural sense of displacement. In *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri is successful in presenting discontentment at the core in the family which she has portrayed. *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai include post-colonialism and globalization as they are related to modern India. The novel portrayed the fact that though we live in this mixed up, messy, globalized world, for many people the dominant response is fear of change based on the deep desire for security. *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee deals with the

diasporic conflicts specifically related to women immigrants perspective. *The* reason behind the selection of these critically acclaimed and prominent writers are these writers have so many similarities and differences as well as they are contemporary authors. All the selected writers in her selected works has shared the stories which are real and pathetic which deals with the concept of identity crisis as well as immigrant experiences. This research is an attempt to find out the effects of migration on the voiceless immigrants and to know in detail about their pathetic situation in the new adopted culture.

Hypotheses:

- Select works revolves around the lives of immigrant characters.
- Effects of migration on the migrants are they keep on assimilating new customs and life styles from the host culture and in the process lose vital aspects of their own culture.
- Common features in the select works of diasporic writers are nostalgia, alienation, homesickness, identity crisis and the sufferings due to living in the hostland.
- Select novels raise question about the identity issues, modernity, culture and westernization.
- Life of the characters are caught between the Indian past and the alien land's present.
- Select authors and works document the pain and hardships of the people who migrate to foreign land.

Aims and Objectives of the Research:

The aims and objectives of the research are:

1. To analyse the immigrant characters in the novels.
2. To analyse the concept of cultural identity, tradition and family expectations and rootlessness.
3. To study the complex cultural relations and identity crisis.

4. To examine the difference between the American way of life and the Indian traditional way of life.
5. To analyse the important themes in the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Bharati Mukherjee.
6. To study the diasporic sensibility and immigrants experiences in the multicultural society of the host land (America) .

Research Design:

The research work is based on applying methods of analysis, close evaluation and interpretation to the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. The researcher has applied the analytical method to investigate problems faced by the people of Indian Diaspora. The research approach used by the researcher is qualitative and descriptive approach, as it involves the reading and analysis of the novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai and *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee. And the research type is analytical as the researcher needs to critically analyse the works. The researcher has evaluated the identity issues and cultural clash of the immigrant peoples. The literary approach used by the researcher is sociological approach to examine the social and cultural context. All the selected novels are used as the primary source of data collection method and the researcher has chosen literary articles, critical works, relevant journals, interviews as secondary sources for the study. The main method of data collection will be library and parallel avenues.The aim of the researcher is to find out the conflicts and identity issues through the critical reading of the selected texts and then to locate them on the thematic ground.

Scope and Limitations of the Study:

Scope and limitations of this research is confined only to the selected text of the selected writers and they are as follows –

Mukherjee, Bharati. The Tiger's Daughter. Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1972. Print.

Mukherjee, Bharati. Jasmine. New York: Grove Weidenfield, 1989.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. The Namesake. Harper Collins Publishers, 2004

Lahiri, Jhumpa. The Lowland. New Delhi: Random House India, 2013.

Desai, Kiran. The Inheritance of Loss. Groove Press, 2006

Apart from these works of select writers researcher will not analyse any other text. The study of this research is limited only to the selected novels stated above. The study focuses on the lives of immigrants and their inner and external conflicts in an alien land, by highlighting issues like cultural predicament, search for identity, multiculturalism and universal aspects of human existence. This research is limited to the analysis of the select texts with reference to diaspora.

Review of Literature:

Gomez, Christine. "The On-Going Quest of Bharati Mukherjee from Expatriation to Immigration" in R.K. Dhawan, ed. Indian Women Novelist, Vol.3 (Delhi: Prestige, 1995).

Christine Gomez (2008): Mukherjee's mention of the article ‚The Tigers Daughters' by Kenneth J. Hsu in this story is only to propagate the idea that, —There is perhaps a longing for the world according to Hsu, alone world free from cultural collisions, dilemmas and separationl. Therefore, the very title of the story suggests a desire for a world free of racism and cultural conflicts, where everyone can feel secure and free.

Enjeti, Anjali. "The Book I Kept for the Cover." The Paris Review, 13 April, 2018.

Anjali Enjeti in her article in The Paris Review said: When I finished reading Jasmine, I was overcome by an unfamiliar literary fervor born of self-recognition. Jasmine's quest to both seize and reinvent her identity resonated with me. After polishing off the book in a day (it's a short two hundred fourteen pages), I wondered which parts of my identity were a product of how others saw me or what others called me (Angela, Angie). How much had the white gaze and, in particular, whiteness in literature permeated and shaped how I saw myself in the world?

To quote Malashri Lal: But, in Jasmine, a strong Indian seems to cling to a place below her habit. "Maximalism", reduced from "theory to practice, tells us about the predictable nature of the fast-approaching arrival experience and refugee movements across the country. America - anywhere

in America the story of Jasmine changes ... But Mukherjee's main character carries the subsequent India and the feminine society within her wherever she goes, and she does not seem to come from the patriarchal frameworks of her upbringing in her homeland. (Qtd. E Kirpal 152)

The Research Paper- "The Treatment of Immigrant Experiences in Jhumpa Lahiri's the Namesake" by D Ebina Cordelia, examines the novel 'Namesake' from Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin's view point of "diaspora" exploring the theme of alienation, loneliness, homelessness and quest for identity. (C.D Ebina: 2011)

It's impossible to deny that *The Namesake* echos some of Lahiri's own experiences as a child of Indian immigrants. Inside the novel, she reminds the reader of the power that language, and in particular, a name can have over a person. It is a commentary on the pressure and expectations that can come from family. *The Namesake* is also undeniably a coming of age story, and over the course of the book, the reader watches as Gogol grows up (sometimes painfully, sometimes beautifully), comes into his own, and eventually begins to accept and embrace his roots. It's a beautiful story of the importance of knowing where you came from.

Merritt, Stephanie. Rev. of The Lowland by Jhumpa Lahiri. The Guardian. September(2013)

Stephanie Merritt (2013) writes on The Lowland in The Guardian, 'The Lowland is a sweeping, ambitious story that examines in intimate detail the intersection of the political and the personal, encompassing nearly 50 years of Indian and American history through the lives of one family.'

(Meenakshi & Hemlata: 2013.Meenakshi Goyal and Hemlata in their research paper "The themes of Alienation and Displacement", discuss the key issues of alienation, displacement, intra-national and international migration with respect to the Anita Desai and Kiran Desai's fictional world. (Meenakshi & Hemlata: 2013.)

Mishra, S. (2006). .Diaspora Criticism. .Edinburgh University Press.

Sudesh Mishra, states the current novel has confirmed major experiences of Karan Desai in the "Dissertation Fiction". It tries to find the background of social, psychological, religious and spiritual events that has thrown out the legendary art of Kiran Desai's. Especially, her innovations in the technology of magic realism make sure his success as a great writer of fiction in English. . Kiran Desai's novels depict the subject of colonial mindset of its cultural roots and on the fence to

look for other civilizations to become a granular priest. These are the stories of exiles in their home and abroad, families love broken and fixed, and bitter-sweet memories. Desai's characters show their different types of varieties and extraordinary levels. For her, it is a fascinating concept of becoming a cultural, which recognizes the characters, by traveling towards hypocritical stabbing of their own culture and travel from their real roots.

Tentative Scheme of Chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter explains the concept of Indian Diaspora. It is an introductory part. The concept Indian Diaspora is defined and other terms related to diaspora such as Immigrant, Identity, Exile, and Multiculturalism are also defined and explained. Indian diaspora and problems related to living in diaspora are explained through the lives and works of Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. This chapter focuses upon the significant background and information related to the identity issues and immigrants experiences . This chapter also states the need and importance of Indian diasporic works to study.

Chapter II: Bharati Mukherjee: *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Jasmine*

Various factors affecting identity issues and alienation are explored in this chapter with respect to The Tiger's Daughter and Jasmine. First part of this chapter analyses the novel The Tiger's Daughter. Feeling of alienation and identity crisis are not uncommon among immigrants and the root cause for most of problems of immigrants are cultural differences in the society.The second part of this chapter analyses the novel Jasmine and this work focuses on the successful attempt of the Indian widow to correct her destiny and gain happiness in the adopted world. This chapter particularly deals with the various reasons behind the identity issues related to the protagonists Jasmine and Tara.

Chapter III: Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*

The Namesake and *The Lowland* are analysed in the second chapter. The first and the second generation immigrants experiences and the cultural conflicts which they witnessed in the new adopted culture/ host land are depicted in this chapter. In the second part of this chapter *The Lowland* is analysed from the diasporic themes of nostalgia, emotions, people's beliefs, their vulnerabilities, their needs and struggles, etc. Both the novels and their main characters are critically analysed through the lens of diaspora.

Chapter IV: Kiran Desai: *The Inheritance of Loss*

The Inheritance of Loss novel is critically analysed in this chapter. This chapter focuses on the diasporic approach of the novel. It explores the concept of immigration, identity, and relationships on both the interpersonal and international scale.The main theme of the novel is the multiplicity of miseries that the immigrants in general and the illegal immigrants in particular face. This chapter explores the split identities of Indian-American diaspora. As a diasporic writer, she exposes all the diasporic elements like identity crisis, migration, illegal immigration, alienation, marginalization and so on in the novel.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This chapter takes the analyses made in the previous chapters and an attempt is made to draw conclusions. This research will conclude to show the texts with the identity crisis faced by the characters of the selected novels and their societal experiences of various kinds. The loss of identity and the way it travels through generations as a sense of loss is an important aspect of the selected texts. Portrayal of characters is significant in the novels of the selected writers.The narrative style, themes, and numerous aspects in the works of the selected novelists are considered in-depth to derive at certain conclusions. Protagonists from all the selected novels finds themselves different from the majority, suffer identity crisis and consider their rootless existence in the society. Those immigrants who settled in an alien land which is far away from their home land is like a challenge for them to embrace multiculturalism. The immigrants can neither forget their past nor embrace

the new land wholeheartedly, that is why they try to live with the duality of mind. They feel alienated in that particular situation and suffers various identity issues.

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